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FALL 2026 NEWSLETTER



IN THIS ISSUE:

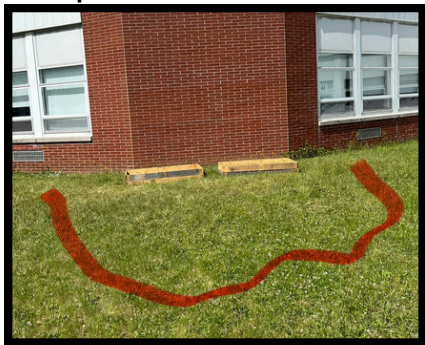
Junior Commissioner Scarlett	p. 3
Junior Commissioner Violet	p. 4
Your Opinion on GPLBs	p. 5

Introducing the JEC Native Pollinator Garden

The new VEC Junior Environmental Commissioner (JEC) Native Pollinator Garden is located in a sunny, building-sheltered area at VHS.

The garden was conceptualized by this year's JECs: Scarlett Morin and Violet Palmer for their main project. Working with the Commission, Scarlett and Violet secured native plants, mulch and other material donations, organized garden prep and planting days, and have been growing the garden since May 30 of this year. Most of the plantings were plant plugs, or very young plants grown in small propagation cells.

On September 22, Scarlett and Violet gave a short presentation describing their work and progress leading up to the growth of this beautiful addition and attraction at Verona High School. They were joined by VEC members and elected officials from the Township Council and the Board of Education.



April 2026



May 30, 2026



August 2026



September 2026





From Left to right: Jay Aiello, Jack McEvoy, Pam Priscoe, Kelly DiGeronimo, Jean Deo, Sarina Knoetig, Scarlett Morin, Sarah O'Farrell, Jessica Pearson, Violet Palmer, Corey Schor, Walter Steinmann, Steve Cherep, Colin Palmer, Joe Sudio, Isis Palmer, Dylan Palmer, Chris Tamburro, and Sean DiBartolo.



The JEC pollinator garden has a legacy plan for after Scarlett and Violet graduate from VHS.

The JECs are busy creating a catalogue of plantings with care instructions. They're working with Mrs. Ramos, Chapter Advisor of the Science National Honor Society, VEC members and VHS teacher/ VEC member Kelly DiGeronimo to develop a care plan so that Honor Society candidates may earn volunteer hours for the garden's care. Additionally, members from the Environmental Club are also invited to participate and VEC members have offered to visit the site to help volunteers identify weeds and address other specific care issues and questions.



**Council Member Corey Schor,
Deputy Mayor Jack McEvoy,
BOE member Sarina Knoetig,
BOE President Pam Priscoe, and
Mayor Chris Tamburro.**



**Scarlett and Violet
presenting the garden to
Township Officials.**



**BOE member Sarina Knoetig,
BOE President Pam Priscoe**

Junior Commissioner Scarlett Morin

Scarlett's View:

Favorite Book: The Notebook. I just thought it was so romantic.

Favorite Perennial Plant: Little bluestem

In my spare time I like to: Paint and play the piano. I like pop music that leans hip hop, like Don Toliver's stuff. My favorite song is his song "Opposite".

Favorite Food: Lasagna

First Place I'd like to visit: Hawaii

In the future: I want to do something in the sciences that helps people and wildlife.

Maybe pharmacy or veterinary medicine, or environmental engineering. I want to travel and see different habitats and cultures of the world.

Q: How did you two think of this project?

A: When it comes to the environment, especially in our town where I live, I really want to be proactive and be outside doing physical work like gardening.

Q: What was the planning process like?

A: I really did not think that I could do this when I proposed the idea in January, and I didn't realize how much goes on behind the scenes for a project like this. There's so much going on in the background.

Q: What did you enjoy the most about the project?

A: I love taking care of this garden — I like to pull the weeds and water it, and imagine the plants saying "refresh me, refresh me!" Now I look at projects around town and think about who is behind them and what the planning process looked like.



Q: How has the pollinator population responded?

A: There are so many butterflies! We especially had a lot of monarchs visiting the milkweed.

Q: What advice would you give to folks starting similar projects?

A: Pick something you're passionate about, and you'll be so much more likely to succeed.

Junior Commissioner Violet Palmer

Violet's View:

Favorite Book: **The Tale of Despereaux; I re-read it every year.**

Favorite Perennial Plant: **Swamp Milkweed**

In my spare time I Like to: **Color and listen to music- Americana and folk music like Joan Baez or Peter Paul and Mary**

Favorite Food: **Chicken soup**

First Place I'd like to visit: **Spain**

Next year I plan on: **College with a double major in history and geology- or- history and political science. I want to give myself options.**



Q: How did you two think of this project?

A: It was Scarlett's idea, and when I heard about it, it seemed like such an opportunity to use the courtyards at VHS. There's no deer problem because it's enclosed, and it gets great sunlight!

Q: What was the planning process like?

A: Originally, we were going to plant just two raised beds, but we received so many plants from our generous donors that we were able to edit our plan to use existing soil and be a much bigger amoeba shape

Q: What did you enjoy the most about the project?

A: I learned that everything in our town is so much more connected than I thought it was, because we got so much support from local leaders and volunteers.

Q: How has the pollinator population responded?

A: We have our standard bumblebee, a lot of moths, and some more I haven't identified yet. I was watering and accidentally sprayed some bees, who were pretty mad. I thought "I'm trying to do this for you!!" But now the bees and I are cool.

Q: What advice would you give to folks starting similar projects?

A: If you have the means to install your own pollinator garden, take the steps and see where the idea goes. I hope that this project shows that we can turn even small areas into active ecosystems.

WE HEARD YOU!

OPINIONS ON GAS POWERED LEAF BLOWER BANS

Our Summer Newsletter asked for readers opinions on GLB's and what sort of ban, if any, they would support.

We took care to outline the opinion held by most landscaping companies against any ban based upon the cost of equipment conversion and the difficulty of recharging batteries and equipment while servicing properties throughout their busy day. That said, our residents felt differently.

We had a split decision between a full ban and a seasonal one. We did not receive emails in support of no ban. We thank residents for their thoughtful email responses.

Opinions received in favor of a seasonal ban included the following comments:

"Seasonal Ban until technology catches up. Then a full ban."

"Part of me would like to say year round ban but I think we should give some latitude for leaf season and spring cleanups."

"In response to GPLBs issue, we are for a partial/seasonal or even better, a full ban. Yes, the initial cost of conversion is high for the landscapers, but the need to move towards steps to care for our planet are crucial."

Opinions received in favor of a full ban included the following comments:

"I can hear it a block away sometimes I'll go walk my dog to escape it. Given the environmental impacts of 2-stroke engines, I even further support the ban."

"I am definitely in support of a full ban on GPLBs. They often start by 7 AM, and continue off and on throughout the day, as more and more neighbors are hiring landscapers."

"I am for full ban of ANY type of gas-powered lawn equipment. Rechargeable battery is much quieter, safer, and cleaner. Not to mention much lower equipment maintenance."

"I'm in favor of a full ban. I enjoy walking our dog and gardening so the leaf blowers disrupt our peace a lot. Another reason for the ban, in addition to the noise and fumes, is the soil erosion they cause. Blowers on the other side of our backyard fence have eroded the soil making a large gap for our dog to pass under and pests to enter our gardens."

The VEC is dedicated to broadening public education through engagement with our community.

This September, the VEC sent the Verona Township Council a recommendation for a full prohibition of Data Centers in all zones of the Township of Verona. See the [Ordinance](#).



Upcoming Events:

Verona Park Conservancy Clean-up: October 17, 2026 9-11 am (Rain Date: October 24)